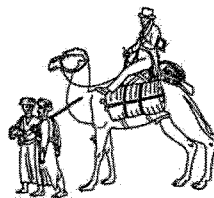


# ASTENE

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRAVEL  
IN EGYPT AND THE NEAR EAST

## BULLETIN



**NOTES AND QUERIES**  
Number 40: Summer 2009

# Bulletin : Notes and Queries

## Number 40 : Summer 2009

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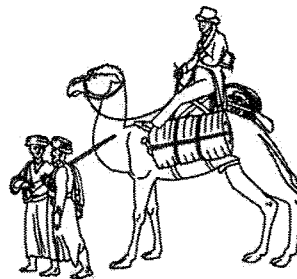
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We welcome articles, queries, replies and other related matters from members and interested readers. Please send contributions to the Editor.

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# ASTENE NEWS AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

## VIII ASTENE Conference, Durham, 10-13 July 2009

The 8<sup>th</sup> ASTENE Conference was held at Collingwood College, the University of Durham from Friday 10<sup>th</sup> to Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July. The weather was fair, but not quite the sweltering heat we had to endure at Oxford or (more remarkably) Manchester.

The organisation was begun by Janet Starkey, and our thanks to her, and to Paul Starkey for all that they did to secure Collingwood College, equipment and funding for some Durham colleagues. Our thanks to Emma Humble of Events Durham for the excellent service at Collingwood.

As Janet and Paul had the unexpected opportunity to spend time in Lebanon, Felicity Wood took over the later stages of organisation and carried through the Conference itself. She was ably assisted by Audrey Willis, Peta Rée, Deb Manley, Georgia Garrett, and Sally Cassidy-Odd.

As one of the founders, and first Chair, of ASTENE, it was entirely appropriate that Paul Starkey should be the keynote speaker on its return to its city of origin with a splendid talk on 'The Troublesome Mountain: Lebanon through Western Eyes.'

The recipients of the ASTENE bursaries Mary Healy, Amanda Heggstad and Anders Ingram, assisted with a range of practical issues, notably the technology of Powerpoint (although there were far fewer problems than in the past – clearly even the older ones amongst us are coming to grips with it). Cassandra Vivian and Colin Heywood took control of the book stall.

A reception at the Oriental Museum allowed participants to view the impressive collection, including the important Egyptian antiquities acquired by the Duke of Northumberland. Our thanks to the Curator, Craig Barclay, to Rachel Grocke, the Administrator, and her sister, Lyn Gatland Secretary to the Friends of Oriental Museum and to John Ruffle, Chairman of the Friends of the Oriental Museum for their hospitality.

The reception also saw the official launch of the latest ASTENE publication, *Saddle the Dogs*, edited by Diane Fortenberry and Deborah Manley (see below).

As well as many familiar faces we were able to welcome some new members. It was particularly good to hear the papers of some younger scholars, and we hope that they will also come to future conferences.

## A Report on the Conference

I am not an ASTENE veteran, having only been to one previous conference – but that was enough to whet my appetite and make me look forward to this one – and I certainly wasn't disappointed. In fact, I think the range of papers was better this time than it was two years ago: in chronological terms, we ranged from Herodotus to the twentieth century (through many points between), and geographically we visited Greece, Turkey, Syria, the Caucasus, Saudi Arabia, North Africa and Iraq, as well, of course, as Egypt. What a very versatile lot we must be!

This amazing diversity means that each of us will have heard (in different proportions, I'm sure) papers on subjects we knew something about, others on subjects we only had a hazy idea of, and others on subjects completely new to us, so we were kept on our feet in a most stimulating (and – speaking for myself – sometimes challenging) way.

Best of all, we met such interesting people, both those giving the papers, others attending the conference, and not least the people who were the subjects of papers. I think of Dr Di-Lotti setting up her hospital in Iraq, Myrtle Broome painting her luminous pictures of Abydos, Byron and Leake dressing up in Albanian costume, and Synesius braving the dangers of sea voyages in ships with unreliable captains – to name but a few. I'm sure all of us have returned home with different images vivid in our heads.

Finally, I take my hat off to all the people who made the practical arrangements run so smoothly, indeed without whom it wouldn't have happened at all. Thank you. Now I'm looking forward to Oxford in 2011.

*Lucy Pollard*

## ASTENE AGM and Committee

The ASTENE AGM was held on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July at Collingwood College and was chaired by our Vice-President, Dr Jaromir Malek. A number of

changes resulted from the completion of terms on the Committee.

Dr Brian Taylor stepped down as Chair of the Committee, having served four years. We are all very grateful to Brian for his leadership, wise counsel, and initiatives, particularly in relation to the Yanni House at Qurna.

Dr Diane Fortenberry stood down as Treasurer a year early, due to pressure of work. Diane has managed ASTENE's finances with great care, as well as taking on the editorship of two volumes, and assisting with the production of the *Bulletin*: our thanks to her for an immense amount of hard work on our behalf.

Elisabeth Woodthorpe officially completed her term as Events Organiser, but will continue the planning of the Albania tour in 2010. We thank Elisabeth for some enjoyable visits to the region – notably Cyprus, Syria and last year's unforgettable *dahabiya* cruise – as well as the many visits to see special aspects of museums, galleries and archives in London and Oxford, as well the overall co-ordination of events.

Dr Hana Navrátilová was co-opted to the Committee during her year in Oxford, and it was very helpful to have the voice of one of our European colleagues at meetings. We wish Hana well on her return to Prague and look forward to the publication of her work on ancient Egyptian graffiti.

At the AGM the following were elected or re-elected: Dr Robert Morkot as Chair; the Hon. Mrs Angela Reid as Secretary; Dr Karen Dorn as Treasurer; Dr Patricia Usick returns to the Committee as Events Organiser; Mr Neil Cooke; Mrs Deborah Manley; Mrs Janet Rady; Dr Paul Robertson; and Dr John Taylor.

## The 'Yanni House'

As reported at the Durham Conference, the remains of the house in Qurna, Luxor, built by Henry Salt and later used by 'Yanni' d'Athanasia, were recently destroyed as part of the clearance of the area, despite our attempts to save it. During the visit to Egypt in November Brian Taylor and Robert Morkot visited Dr Mansour Boraik, SCA Director for the West Bank to express ASTENE's concerns. Both Dr Boraik and Dr Zahi Hawass, Head of the SCA were in favour of preserving the house, but were unable to influence local government policy.

See also Patricia Usick's request in *Notes and Queries*.

## Saddling the Dogs

The Durham Conference saw the launch of ASTENE's most recent publication, *Saddling the Dogs: Journeys through Egypt and the Near East*, edited by Diane Fortenberry and Deborah Manley. Congratulations to them both for an excellent production. Many of the papers were presented at the Southampton Conference of 2007 and the subjects are the usual wide range. A review will appear in the next Bulletin.

## Visit to the Palestine Exploration Fund

**Visit to the Collections and Archives of The Palestine Exploration Fund**, 2 Hinde Mews, London W1U 2AA, Thursday 29 October 2009 at 5.30pm. The visit will be followed by private reception and optional dinner at a Lebanese restaurant. £5 donation to the PEF.

By booking only: [pusick@btinternet.com](mailto:pusick@btinternet.com). or tel. 0207 328 2735.

The Palestine Exploration Fund was founded in 1865 and is the oldest organization in the world created specifically for the study of the Levant, the Southern portion of which was conventionally known as 'Palestine'. Felicity Cobbing, the Curator, will give us a view of their fascinating collections which include artefacts, natural history specimens, documents, maps, archival material, paintings, drawings and photographs. Join us afterwards for drinks at the home of an Astene member and dinner at a local Lebanese restaurant. Hinde Mews is a short walk from Bond Street underground station.

## A Gift to ASTENE

ASTENE has received a splendid gift from the library of the late Sister Maureen Purcell O.P. It is a slender leather-bound A5 book with *Tours of Palestine* tooled in gold on the cover.

Inside is a 'menu' of the delights of travel offered by Thomas Cook & Sons in 1900, and the term 'Palestine' embraces Egypt, the Nile, Sinai, Petra, Moab, The Hauran, Palmyra, Turkey and Cyprus – indeed ASTENE's own touring ground.

Within are listed "Tours available for CONDUCTED PARTIES or for one or more Passengers to TRAVEL INDEPENDENTLY during 1900."

The book gives a report on the development of Cook's travel in the Near East since it had first announced tours to the Middle East in 1867. Much is made of the many, many royals, nobles and aristocrats for whom they had provided travel arrangements.

Before 1867, "Palestine, as far as travelling in it was concerned had been a sealed book, except to a comparatively few wealthy noblemen and distinguished students ..." – ASTENE researches have shown this to be not entirely true ...

Amongst the celebrated people who Cook's Tours had assisted were two of Queen Victoria's sons, and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in 1882, General Gordon (who had enjoyed a Cook's steamer), General Wallace (author of *Ben Hur*), the Palestine Exploration Society. In 1888, the Russian royals travelled with Cook's – and were even accompanied by Thomas Cook himself. In 1889, 110 pilgrims from "the Latin Church from all parts of the United States" went on pilgrimage with Cook's.

In 1898, the prime travellers were the German Emperor and Empress (with a party of 105 people), and additionally a party of Pachas (with 108 attendants), sent to represent the Sultan of Turkey. On this occasion Cook's had to acquire 1430 riding horses, mules and pack animals, 116 landaus, carriages and luggage carts, 3 special trains, 300 tents, 800 muleteers, and 290 camp servants.

An index of several pages (103-117) lists "some of the Royal and Distinguished Persons who have travelled under the arrangements of Thomas Cook and Son" including the Emperor and Empress of Brazil, the Shah of Persia, the sons of the King of Siam, the Maharaja of Bahoda, the Shamzada of Afghanistan. The Khedive Ismael, and numerous lords, bishops etc.

A whole conference of papers could be made from the background of this little leather-bound book ...

We took the little book to the ASTENE Conference in Durham to share it with members there and will now pass it on into the safe-keeping of Oxford University's Sackler Library, so we can share it with a wider world.

I myself had had great pleasure from it during the weeks it was in my care.

Deborah Manley

## Blue Plaque for an ASTENE Traveller

Dr Edwin Aiken sent us a cutting from his local newspaper reporting the unveiling by the Ulster History Circle of a blue plaque to the memory of **Francis Rawdon Chesney** (1789-1872) "Soldier and Explorer and Father of the Suez Canal".

The plaque is placed on the house where Chesney was born: 6 Sabbath Hill, Ballyvea, near Kilkeel, Northern Ireland.



*F.R. Chesney*

General Francis Rawdon Chesney taken from the frontispiece of *The Life of the late General F.R. Chesney*, by Louise Chesney and Jane O'Donnell, edited Stanley Lane-Poole, publisher W.H. Allen 1885.

The report told of Chesney's expedition down the Euphrates River and his survey in 1830 of the Suez isthmus to evaluate the possibility of cutting a canal from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. In 1856 his contribution to the Canal was acknowledged by de Lesseps. Chesney also surveyed the course of the projected railway from Antioch to the Euphrates. In

1835-7 he returned to chart the Euphrates, Tigris and Karun rivers.

## Obituary: Professeur Jean Yoyotte (1927-2009)

One of the great figures of Egyptology, Jean Yoyotte, professeur honoraire of the Collège de France, died in Paris on 1 July 2009 at the age of 81. Yoyotte was best known for directing the archaeological excavations at the site of Tanis in the Egyptian Delta from 1964, taking over from Pierre Montet who had discovered the royal tombs of the 21st and 22nd Egyptian Dynasties in 1939. Yoyotte organised the 1987 Paris exhibition featuring the marvellous finds from Tanis. The exhibition came to Edinburgh in 1988 as 'Gold of the Pharaohs'.

Yoyotte attended the original 1995 conference on 'Travellers in Egypt', which gave birth to ASTENE, in Durham, where he gave a paper with J.J. Fiechter, on the French excavator Jean-Jacques Rifaud (1786-1852). Rifaud worked for the French Consul Drovetti and was the largely forgotten counterpart to the more famous figure of Belzoni, employed by the British Consul Salt. The paper was entitled 'état de la recherche', research in preparation for Fiechter's 1994 book *La Moisson des Dieux* for which Yoyotte wrote the preface. Fiechter was to bring the figure of Rifaud out from the shadows based on Rifaud's unpublished journal and correspondence.

Yoyotte's obituary in *Le Monde* newspaper notes his sometimes caustic manner, and his lean figure, gaunt face, and occasionally surprising sartorial taste ('mince, au visage sévère, mais capable de surprendre par des tenues vestimentaires insolite'). I certainly recall him from the 1995 conference, which he attended with his wife, as dressed rather dramatically all in black with biker boots. Other Egyptologists I have spoken to remember his passion for Egyptology, and the fact that he was perpetually swathed in clouds of cigarette smoke. *Le Monde* adds that Yoyotte did not restrict his field of study and his insatiable curiosity broadened his horizons. Another obituary refers to his free spirit and encyclopaedic knowledge. Among his many other roles he was the scientific advisor to Franck Goddio in the underwater exploration of the coast of Alexandria.

*Patricia Usick*

## Photo Safari to Egypt, October 10-26, 2009

When the camera was born the early photographers were told, 'Go to Egypt for the light.' They did and we have an impressive record of images from some very famous photographers. What no one told them is that in Egypt October has the best light.

This 17-day 'safari' visits Siwa and the Western Desert, the Oases and Luxor with photographer and writer Cassandra Vivian, who lived there for twenty years and knows the where, when, and how of taking pictures in Egypt. Cassandra has exhibited in Cairo, London, and the US. She is well-known to ASTENE members, and for her guide to the Western Desert.

Theban Travel PO Box 1119, Guildford, UK GU1 9LN +44 (0) 1483 828 628 [info@theban-travel.co.uk](mailto:info@theban-travel.co.uk) [www.theban-travel.co.uk](http://www.theban-travel.co.uk)



Drovetti at Karnak with Rifaud behind him.

# OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

## Lectures etc

Saturday 5 September, 15.30-17.30 and Sat 3 October, **Zipang: Mesopotamian Storytelling workshop**. Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2.

Friday 11 September, 18.00-20.00, **The Gurob Harem Palace Project: 2009 season results**. Cruciform Lecture Theatre 1, Gower Street, London WC1. A fund-raising event for the GHPP. Four sessions considering the architecture of harem palaces, issues around re-assessing Petrie's work in 1898, and the latest results of the 2009 archaeological expedition. Organised by the Friends of the Petrie Museum. Fee £20 (£15 PMF members). Contact: [janpicton@ijnet.demon.co.uk](mailto:janpicton@ijnet.demon.co.uk), [www.ucl.ac.uk/FriendsofPetrie](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/FriendsofPetrie)

12-13 September, **The Ancient World Conference**, Cruciform Lecture Theatre 1, Gower Street, London WC1. Speakers include Dr Sabry Abd el-Aziz. Michael Woods, Stephen Quirke, Rosalie David, Paul Collins, Dirk Huyge. E-mail: [conference@ancient.co.uk](mailto:conference@ancient.co.uk); [www.ancient.co.uk](http://www.ancient.co.uk)

Thursday 17 September, **Science and Rationalism in 9<sup>th</sup> Century Baghdad**. A British Institute for the Study of Iraq Lecture by Professor Jim Al-Khalili in aid of the BISI Appeal for Iraqi Scholars, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, 18.00. Tickets (£20.00, £15.00 for BISI members) limited to 100 available from BISI at the address above, or contact Joan Porter MacIver, e-mail: [bisi@britac.ac.uk](mailto:bisi@britac.ac.uk); [www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/institutes/iraq/)

23-26 September, **Conference: Arts of the Mamluks**, SOAS, Thornhaugh St, London WC1. Further details contact Jane Savory, [js64@soas.ac.uk](mailto:js64@soas.ac.uk)

Tuesday 6 October, **The Amman Citadel, the Palace of Mushatta, and the making of legends in Jordan**. Council for British Research in the Levant Lecture by Alan Walmsley, G6 Lecture Theatre, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, 31 Gordon Square, London WC1, 18.00, Enquiries, Penny Wiggins [cbrl@britac.ac.uk](mailto:cbrl@britac.ac.uk)

Saturday 10 October, **Egypt Exploration Society Fundraising Event**, at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG. Lectures: Stephen Quirke, *Hidden hands: Egyptian*

*workforces in Petrie excavation archives 1880-1924*, Robert Morkot, *The measurements of Petrie's bedroom and other (more interesting) things that archives tell us*. Christopher Naunton, *The EES Lucy Gura Archive Project*. Tickets: £15.00 non-members (£12.00 EES members). Further information: [www.ees.ac.uk](http://www.ees.ac.uk)

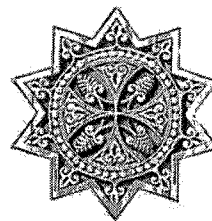
12-16 April 2010 **7<sup>th</sup> International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East**. Organised by the Department of the Middle East, British Museum and the Institute of Archaeology, UCL. Helen Taylor 7ICAANE Administrator, e-mail: [admin@7icaane.org](mailto:admin@7icaane.org), [www.7icaane.org](http://www.7icaane.org)

**Robert Stephenson and Egyptian Railways**  
Andrew Wilson has sent details of the following lecture:-

"Robert Stephenson's work in Egypt" by Alan Clothier, to take place in Newcastle on Tyne, on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, at 7.15 for 7.30 pm, at the Mining Institute, Neville Hall, Westgate Road, Newcastle on Tyne, NE1 1SE. There is no booking, 'just come'. The contact for information is John Irving, tel.01434 688946.

Robert Stephenson was the Engineer of the first railways in Egypt, built in the 1850s. This meeting is sponsored by the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Robert Stephenson Trust. Alan Clothier spent a long time in Egypt in the 1980s on secondment from British Railways to the Egyptian Railways and he had access to their early records. He is a Director and Trustee of the Robert Stephenson Trust.

**Seven Years On: The Iraq National Museum & Cultural Heritage in Iraq**. British Institute for the Study of Iraq and Birkbeck Mesopotamia Archaeology 2010 Study Day, organised and chaired by Dr Mariana Giovino. Saturday 6 February 2010, 10.00-17.00. Birkbeck College, University of London, Course Code FFAR160NO ACS. Further details of courses can be found at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/ce/archaeology/index.html>





## CONFERENCES 2010

### Correspondence: Travel, Writing, and Literatures of Exploration, c. 1750-c. 1850

An international conference hosted by the University of Edinburgh and National Library of Scotland 7-10 April 2010.

The University of Edinburgh (Institute of Geography and Centre for the History of the Book), in collaboration with the National Library of Scotland, is pleased to announce "Correspondence: travel, writing, and literatures of exploration, c. 1750-c.1850" – a four-day, interdisciplinary conference concerned with travel, travel writing, and the associated literatures of exploration.

In bringing together scholarly perspectives from geography, book history, literary studies, and the history of science, the conference seeks to interrogate the relationship between travel, exploration, and publishing in order better to understand how knowledge acquired 'in the field' became, through a series of material and epistemic translations, knowledge on the page. Plenary speakers include Joyce Chaplin (Harvard University), Nigel Leask (University of Glasgow), and Tim Fulford (Nottingham Trent University). Proposals for papers on all aspects of travel in the period in question are welcome. Preference may be given to papers which engage with one or more of the following themes:

- Travellers' inscriptive practices

How, where, when, and why did travellers and explorers choose to record the details of their journeys? In what respects did the mode and style of travellers' written accounts – whether rough notes, regularised diaries and logs, thematic reports, or letters – discipline their content and reflect their intended purpose?

- Travellers' credibility and the veracity of written accounts

Given that travellers and explorers were only ever partial and imperfect witnesses, how did they assure themselves – and, through the published versions of their work, their audiences – of the truth? How did their accounts correspond to the things they sought

to describe and understand? What were the epistemological bases to travellers' claims to truth?

- The correspondence between manuscript and print

What were the material and epistemic transformations which turned travellers' initial notes into completed, published narratives? Which changes and adaptations were considered necessary in making the transition from manuscript to print? How, in a pre-photographic age, were credible illustrations produced in the field, and how did they supplement and lend authority to printed texts?

Proposals of no more than 250 words should be sent to Dr Innes M. Keighren, Institute of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Drummond Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 9XP or by email to [innes.keighren@ed.ac.uk](mailto:innes.keighren@ed.ac.uk) no later than 1 October 2009. The organizers hope to have a programme of over twenty papers over the four days of the meeting (including plenary papers).

Organisers: Dr Bill Bell, Dr Innes M. Keighren, Professor Charles W. J. Withers.

### British Egyptology Congress 3

It has recently been announced that the Third British Egyptology Congress (BEC3) will be held at the British Museum, Sat 11 and Sun 12 September 2010. Further details will become available at: [bec3@ees.ac.uk](mailto:bec3@ees.ac.uk)

### The Alexander Romance in the East

- A conference looking at the legacy of the stories of Alexander the Great as preserved in the Persian and Arab versions.

A joint conference organised by Richard Stoneman of the Department of Classics and Ancient History and Ian Netton of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. To be held at the University of Exeter 26-29 July 2010.

Details at: [http://huss.exeter.ac.uk/classics/conferences/alexander\\_romance\\_in\\_the\\_east.php](http://huss.exeter.ac.uk/classics/conferences/alexander_romance_in_the_east.php)



# BOOKS AND REVIEWS

*The Bulletin Reviews Editor is Myra Green: m.g.@myragreen.f9.co.uk We welcome reviews of books which may be of interest to members, as well as reviews of travellers' books that reveal the reactions of contemporary readers.*

***Pharaoh's Flowers: the Botanical Treasures of Tutankhamun*, F. Nigel Hepper, second edition, hardback; KWS Publishers, Chicago (University Press) & London (81 Oxford Street, W1D 2EU); also obtainable at Kew Shops at Victoria Gate Plaza, Kew Rd, Richmond. ISBN 987-0-9817736-3-6. Price £23.00.or \$35.00. 2009.**

Updated version of the 1990 softback first edition, with additions and corrections. The golden face of Tutankhamun was garlanded with fresh flowers exquisitely preserved after over 3000 years. Each chapter carries detailed descriptions of plants species found in the tomb. Profusely illustrated

***The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*. Edited by Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchahk Bajjaly, Boydell and Brewer, ISBN: 978-1-84383-483-0. 352 pp. 24 colour and 44 b/w illustrations, p/b. £16.99. Boydell and Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge IP12 3 DF, UK; e-mail: trading@boydell.co.uk; www.boydellandbrewer.com**

The looting, theft and destruction of the Baghdad museum and numerous archaeological sites in Iraq in the wake of the US led invasion in 2003 has been constantly in the news. This volume presents the views of many of those involved.

***The Man Who Invented History – Travels with Herodotus* by Justin Marozzi. John Murray, ISBN 978-0-7195-6711-7, hb/, b/w illustrations, 333pp., £25.00.**

Herodotus lived between around 485 and 425 B.C.E.. His *Histories* is regarded as the first comprehensive account of the then ancient world and is highly regarded not only for an account of the Graeco-Persian Wars but also for his observations on the lives and customs of the ordinary man. We would, today, refer to him as a 'travel writer historian'. Indeed, he is considered to be the first such writer. In *The Man who invented History – Travels with Herodotus* Justin Marozzi, also a 'travel writer historian', recounts his visits to some of the locations in the Middle East associated with Herodotus and reflects upon how Herodotus might have responded to the world as it is today. He is helped – as was Herodotus – by interviews with a

number of local worthies (in his cases by other historians, curators, archaeologists, etc.) which he reports with journalistic zeal. He started his journey in Halicarnassus (now Bodrum in Turkey) where Herodotus was born, travelled eastwards to Baghdad and Babylon, south to Egypt and the desert and, finally, north to Greece. Of particular interest to members will be his account of the present state of the archaeological museum at Baghdad, the foundation of which was inspired by Gertrude Bell, and also the mutilation of Babylon by the Coalition forces in the recent invasion who used the site as a storage depot with a helipad. A final delight is, however, his lunch assignation, in the Peloponnese, with the doyen of today's travel writer historians, Patrick Leigh Fermor.

There are a few photographs to provide the reader with some reference points to his travels, but this is essentially a book of ideas and not of scene painting. It can comfortably be read at home and it is not in any sense a guidebook. The interviews he records are given a fairly light touch and the author is inclined to obscure his scholarship and enthusiasms behind some curiously chosen aspects of his thesis. With so many named places and characters – both Herodotean and modern – it is disappointing but understandable that there is no index. Attempts to refer back to something recently read can be frustrating and time consuming without such a useful tool, particularly in a work of history.

Towards the end of this fascinating book, however, the author records losing his 'Moleskine' in which he had recorded details of his travels and interviews and which were to form the basis of this account. He had been exploring, on foot, the Tunnel of Eupalinos on the island of Samos, when he realised that the precious notebook was missing. He began to reflect upon the possibility that his whole Herodotean enterprise would have to be abandoned. Later, and to his immense relief, he recovered the vital volume on some Polycratean fortifications he had visited earlier. Without having seen the contents of his notebook – obviously – I would venture to offer the view that there is ample evidence in this volume of his vast experience and understanding of the Middle East to be satisfied that the author would be able to produce a valuable contribution to Herodotean studies without the minutiae that his notebook undoubtedly contains.

This volume should not be confused with the similarly titled *Travels with Herodotus* by the distinguished Polish writer Ryszard Kapuscinski

(Allen Lane, 2007) who, as a young reporter was with a copy of *The Histories* and took it with him on his many assignments rather in the manner of Count László Almásy, the model for 'The English Patient' in Michael Ondaatje's novel and film.

A truly satisfying guide to *The Histories* is *The Landmark Herodotus – The Histories*, edited by Robert B. Strassler, Quercus, 2008. This massive volume, of over 1000 pages, which includes the full text and requires a sturdy bookcase, provides all the elucidation one might wish with clear and relevant maps, explanatory notes, modern names where place names have changed and a selection of interpretive essays by leading scholars.

*George Hutcheson*

***Noble Brutes: how Eastern horses transformed English culture*, by Donna Landry. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. \$50.00. ISBN 978-0-8018-9028-4**

Amid the surge of historical studies of ways in which the East influenced the West, Donna Landry has written a finely researched book, presenting equine character and horsemanship as an exemplar of that theme. What became a central icon of Englishness, and of an imperial identity – the thoroughbred horse – was historically derived from Eastern imports; as were many of the skills and ideas that went with it. We of today are relatively familiar with the Eastern origins of porcelain, the carpets and tapestry, the silks and spices. But conditioned as we are by photography and the motor-car, it has been harder for the generally educated western reader to appreciate how central horses and horsey ideals were to the dominant class in Western society, especially in England and Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and late 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This book overcomes that difficulty for the non-horsey reader who is willing to be become engrossed.

Donna Landry is a Professor of English at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Her writing is elegant and careful, a pleasure to read, but not suited to dipping and skimming. Committed readers, however, will find themselves immersed in a fascinating story, in which several narratives are intertwined. They will encounter Jonathan Swift and his well-bred Houyhnhnms; the paintings of George Stubbs, especially the magnificent Whistlejacket; John Buchan and his Greenmantle; the Englishman's concept of liberty and the power that complements it; wily traders in Aleppo and proud jockeys at Newmarket; the Duke of Newcastle, doyen of English breeders, and a host of

Turkish and Arab characters of all classes. The author also tells us a lot about painters and painting of the period. This is not just a valuable contribution to 'animal history', it is a major – but not lengthy – addition to our understanding of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Ottoman achievements and superiority have ceased to be acknowledged in the west, but until about 1750, this was not so. English and Scottish travellers to Constantinople were awed in 'imperial envy' and eager to learn, while Turkish travellers in the west were few and unimpressed. Between 1650 and 1750, many fine Arab, Barbary and Turkish stallions and mares were imported into England, and thus began the obsession with improved breeding, racing and hunting, and debates on how best to do those things, which became an essential part of Englishness. For a certain class of men a noble horse was "an idealized version of the human self". Even the detailed recording of pedigree was a practice based on Eastern precedent. More morally admirable was the Turkish/Arab spirit of gentleness in their relation to their horses and in how they rode them. It might cause surprise, even chagrin, in British and other Western readers now, but 300 years ago Europeans were noted for harshness in training; we had to learn from the East the wisdom of being humane and reasonable in dealing with animals whose willingness to cooperate with a kind master was a sign of their perceived rationality.

This is one of Landry's recurring themes. It is linked in one direction to political metaphor: the nascent constitutional monarchy after the Restoration was, like intelligent riding, a moderated form of authority, and all the better for it. In practical ways, there were fashions and debated claims about the style of riding to be adopted by jockeys and in the hunting-field. The Turks rode shorter and more forward than had formerly been the English custom. But this Eastern influence admirably suited the British love of a fast free-flowing ride across country in an easy snaffle (not a curb bit), which became an embodiment of the spirit of liberty. By contrast, Continental equitation in the manege emphasised control and discipline, imposed on the horse as on people under authoritarian rule.

More complex and less accessible to the general reader is Landry's treatment of the development of the English hunting seat, on which influences and practices seem to have varied considerably over the centuries. She also examines the vexed and ultimately unanswerable question of the racial origins of horse-types known as Arabian or Turk or

Barb (from Barbary), according partly to the point of embarkation for the voyage to England, and partly to a profile of physical qualities. The central steppes of the Turks were where fast and beautiful horses came from, by whatever route to the Mediterranean. In her account, it seems quite clear that Arabia was not uniquely the origin of the sires and dams which produced the English Thoroughbred. These fine imported horses were surprisingly small, but by good keep and daily feeding on the lush grass of England or Ireland, and by shrewd cross-breeding, the taller, leggier Thoroughbred emerged, treasured as an English icon, its foreign origins screened from memory.

As time went by, whatever was “Turkish” fell into general disfavour, while the “Arabian” was idealized. Small spirited horses which are dish-faced, cock-tailed and short in the back have become known as Arabs, and still are today. These are the horses which, in her final chapter, Landry describes as resulting from a 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century revival in interest in bloodstock from the East to maintain quality and “purity”, of which Wilfrid and Anne Blunt were single-minded champions. There is a gender theme here. Tall heavy-boned English men required big thoroughbreds to carry them; her ladyship by contrast was very happy on an elegant 15-hand Arab. With the banning of fox-hunting and the modern feminization of riding as an activity, we see Donna Landry’s theme confirmed even as it turns back on itself. In Britain at least, we have repudiated the imperial identity and – alas – the high-minded ideals of liberty which were formed and sustained by horse-minded gentry in past centuries.

Such thoughts arise in the reviewer’s mind after reading Donna Landry’s admirable book. The main text is only 175 pages, followed by 40 pages of meticulously detailed notes, and finally an essay on her impressive range of sources. It is likely to stimulate thinking and discussion well beyond its equine and equestrian theme, especially for ASTENE members fascinated by the influences of the East on the West.

Nicolas Hawkes

*Travellers’ Graffiti from Egypt and the Sudan. VII. KARNAK. Great Temple of Amun: Festival Temple-Pillared Hall (Tuthmosis III), Hypostyle-Great Columns 1-12 in central aisle (Ramesses III and IV) Smaller columns 75 and 76 (Ramesses II and IV, Sethos I).* Roger O. De Keersmaecker. 82 pp many illustrations. Graffito-Graffiti 2009,

Mortsel (Antwerp), Belgium. Available in September direct: Roger.de.keersmaecker@skynet.be www.egypt-sudan-graffiti.be

The latest volume in Roger De Keersmaecker’s fascinating and valuable series is dedicated to ASTENE. As with earlier volumes it updates the entries for individuals as more information has become available – and this clearly shows the contribution of individual ASTENE members (such as the additions from Andrew Oliver).

The first part of this volume is devoted to the Pillared Hall of the ‘Festival’ temple complex of Thutmose III. It contains a significant collection of graffiti of British soldiers, some in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Hussars, carved in 1884. Also included are scans of military records relating to two of these soldiers: John Gowans and William Gillard. Amongst other familiar names are Henry Lowry Corry and Sarah Lushington.

The second part publishes the graffiti of the great columns of the central aisle of the Hypostyle Hall and two of the ‘smaller’ columns. Again, there are many familiar names: Irby and Mangles, Armar Lowry Corry, Holroyd, Destourmel, Frediani, Letorzec.

There are illustrations of many of the graffiti, and there are also some evocative more general views. Some of the illustrations are printed on heavier, glossy paper. Apart from minor quibbles about the colouring of some of the graffiti illustrations (rather red or pink – perhaps reflecting the age of the slides), the whole is well-produced and, as with earlier volumes, spiral bound, which makes it a useful working tool. It is, in fact, an *essential* working tool for anyone in our area of interest.

Robert Morkot

*Islamic Monuments in Cairo: the Practical Guide.* Caroline Williams. New Revised Edition. The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo and New York, 2008. 301 pp. b/w drawings, maps and colour plates.

Originating in a volume of 1974 by Richard Parker and Robin Sabin, this has long been the essential guide to the Islamic monuments in Cairo. The third edition of 1985 was revised and enlarged by Caroline Williams. This is the sixth edition, and some 30 pages longer than the fifth. Curiously, it is about the same page length as the third edition – but that comparison is totally deceptive as both the

overall size and the layout are very different. Also, a casual comparison of the entry (selected at random) on the Ghuriya shows the extensive additions and alterations to the text over the years. Considerably more historical, architectural and cultural information has been added. Also, some of the more mildly judgmental comments (probably stemming from the first edition) have disappeared. For example, another monument, described in 1985 as “primarily of interest to the dedicated art historian” because difficult to find and “rather disappointing” is now – although still difficult to find – merely “very plain”.

Although it is intended to be used practically on site, it is all too easy to be drawn into the text on a wet summer’s day in England! There is a mass of contextual historical information, architectural detail, notes on pharaonic blocks used as door sills, and updates on the extensive recent conservation work and use of buildings. Yet, it is – as we would expect – accessible, and, of course, beautifully written. And like all good books of this type, it sets the reader off wondering what the author has to say on such-a-such building. In my case – musing on that antithesis of the ‘very plain’ I wondered what Caroline had to say about the Mosque of Muhammad Ali on the Citadel (often referred to – but not here – as the ‘Alabaster Mosque’): “the profuse and eclectic decoration ... is at odds with the simplicity of the architectural structure itself”. Diplomatic certainly, but it did alert me to the fact that, in my many visits over the years, I have tended to wince at the superficial and not look beyond: I felt that another visit might be worthwhile. And sheathed in ‘alabaster’ (instead of marble) “to stimulate a waning local industry” – another of Muhammad Ali’s deeds of which I was unaware.

There are colour photographs by the author. The third edition had b/w photographs by Parker and others and reproductions of 19<sup>th</sup> century views by Hay and Roberts: these have now been replaced by very attractive line drawings by Jaroslaw Dobrowolski. There are good clear maps relating to the chapters and itineraries, as well as explanatory architectural drawings. The index is very detailed, and follows the earlier editions in having monuments arranged chronologically and typologically: so the Ghuriya is indexed under “al-Ghuri, Sultan” and under “mosque”. The most important buildings also get a star-rating in the index. Altogether, highly informative and highly recommended.

Robert Morkot

*A Journey into the World of the Ottomans The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737)* by Olga Nefedova. Skira editore S.p.A. Milan, 2009. ISBN 978 88 6130 794 4. h/b 206pp, 202 illustrations). £32.50p, \$60.

The title of this book is a little misleading, as only pages 83-144 actually deal with the life and work of Vanmour himself. The first two chapters consist of a general overview of Orientalism, with the obligatory references to Edward Said and the subsequent controversies. After the third chapter, on Vanmour, there follows an essay about Istanbul and the artists there in the eighteenth century. Then we return to the influence of Vanmour on other artists. After that, a bibliography and an epilogue, but no index. However, it is sumptuously illustrated, with the most varied selection of Orientalist pictures imaginable, from Gentile Bellini (*Seated Scribe*, 1479-1480) to Vanessa Hodgkinson (*Fille Turque*, 2006). Thus Vanmour is placed in the broadest context and definition of Orientalism.

The reason that only a moderate amount is written about Vanmour himself is that we know almost nothing about him. The brief documentation of his early life consists of such things as his membership of the *Guilde de Saint-Luc* in Valenciennes and his being fined 12 livres tournois in 1690 for breaking their rules, but little else. The date he actually arrived in Istanbul and started work is not certain, (1699? 1703-4? 1707?) and what he did there would be even more obscure, if it were not for the evidence of the paintings themselves.

Vanmour is famous now, certainly not for the rather muddy finish of his paintings, but for his depiction of the various ambassadors, their reception at the Ottoman court, and their activities while in Istanbul. Even more valuable historically are the series of prints after paintings (these now sadly missing), commissioned by the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Ferriol. They were first published as *Receuil de cent estampes représentant différentes nations du Levant...*, 1712-1713. This became the inexhaustible sourcebook of scenes of Ottoman life, used throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century by many artists, sculptors and designers, including J. J. Kändler at Meissen, when making his famous *Turquerie* figures. So many plagiarised Vanmour’s work, from eminent painters like Carle Van Loo, down to the crudest hack illustrators, stuck for a picture of a typical Turk or other Ottoman subject.

This book summarizes what is known about Vanmour, and illustrates his work, with the added

bonus of reproducing all kinds of other Orientalist works, well known and obscure. And any book that cheerfully includes such random gems as Gustav Bauernfeind's *A street scene, Damascus*, and J. F. Lewis's *The Kibab Shop, Scutari*, is arguably worth having.

Charles Newton

***Birds without Wings*, Louis de Bernières, Vintage, London 2005 Paperback, £7.99.**

Louis de Bernières is possibly best known for *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* which is set in the Greek island of Cephallonia during the Italian campaign at the beginning of World War II and was recently made into a visually beautiful film. *Birds without Wings*, the fruit of ten years research, is a "prequel" which features the harrowing stories of some of the characters and is a more ambitious and eventually satisfying novel. The structure is complex and sprawling and wanders about with little regard for narrative sequence rather like the two great imperial powers of the Austrian Hapsburgs and the Ottoman Turks who between them controlled most of Europe and the Middle East for centuries in a way that with hindsight now seems pragmatic and functional. Against this backdrop the book chronicles the impact of the Gallipoli campaign of 1915 on Eskibahce, a small town in Anatolia with a mixed population of Turks and Greeks who shared a Turkish language written in Greek letters, social customs, religious ceremonies and friendships. Two boys – one Greek Christian the other Turkish Muslim fight in the Turkish trenches, the local Turkish pasha takes a Greek woman from Constantinople, who admittedly has to pretend that she is a Circassian, into his household, the imam's blessing is essential for a newly born Christian child, the presence of Kemal Ataturk looms over all and much more. De Bernières controls everything through rich, dense yet clear prose. Move around this book and re-read it often. You will be rewarded with a better understanding of the anguish of the contemporary Middle East and the Balkans.

Jennifer Scarce

If you have enjoyed this book read on:-

Mark Mazower, *Salonica – city of ghosts – Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*. Harper Collins, 2004.

Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost – Smyrna 1922 – The destruction of Islam's city of tolerance*. Sceptre, 2008.

Andrew Wheatcroft, *The enemy at the gate – Hapsburgs, Ottomans and the battle for Europe*. Bodley Head, 2008.

Jennifer Scarce adds: I very much liked the section in No 39 on Some Fictional Travels and would like to contribute the following paperbacks, all very different:-

Eric Ambler, *Journey into Fear*. Re-issued in Penguin Modern Classics, 2009 with introduction by Norman Stone. Classic spy novel about an engineer and arms expert involved in high level talks with the Turkish government just before World War II and the consequences for him.

Harry Hopkins, *The 1001 Nights of Drummer Donald Macleod*. Canongate, 2000. Wonderfully detailed and entertaining historical novel based on the adventures of a young Highland soldier in the Egyptian campaign of the Napoleonic wars who is captured and survives as the dragoman Osman.

Barbara Nadel, *River of the Dead*, 2009. Latest in her series of novels featuring the Istanbul detective Cetin Ikmen and his trusty staff – Inspector Mehmet Suleiman descendant of a faded Ottoman family, and Serjeant Ayse Farsakoglu, a 'new' Turkish woman. Rich in local detail even if the plots get a bit wild and woolly!



# Research Resources

## Google Rules OK:

While one may have strong reservations about the reproduction for free downloading of rather extensive 'snippets' of books still in copyright – especially if they are one's own – one must welcome with delight Google's 'fullview' reproduction of books not only long out of copyright but generally unavailable except in a few reference libraries. Many of these books may be of interest to ASTENE members.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be a comprehensive list, so you need to decide on an author whose book you want to view, and call it up individually. You may be very surprised.

This is how you do it:

Call up: <http://books.google.com>

Then select your author and type in: In author: "author's name" (the inverted commas round the required name are important, as always, to eliminate irrelevant material)

These are some of the authors whose works are available for 'fullview' and downloading in full or in part:

Giovanni d'Athanasia, James Bruce, James Silk Buckingham (not his autobiography), John Lewis Burckhardt, John Carne, Vivant Denon, Giovanni Finati, George AF Fitzclarence, John Fuller, John James Halls, Frederick Henniker, Charles Irby, TR Jolliffe, Alexander Kinglake, Henry Light, RR Madden, John Madox, Walter Plowden, RR Richards, Henry Salt, William Turner, George Waddington, James Webster, WR Wilson. This is by no means a definitive list.

I have not tried either of the following two sites, but they look as if they might be useful.

[www.faganfinder.com/google2](http://www.faganfinder.com/google2) refines a Google search by letting one state precise dates and other specifics.

And has anyone tried Google Translate?  
<http://translate.google.com> and type in the passage you want translated.

## Newspapers online:

Increasingly, large collections of newspapers and periodicals are accessible on-line. Some require subscription, but others can be accessed at the British Library and other institutions. Some of us are fortunate to have access through our own institutional libraries.

Cengage Gale 19<sup>th</sup> Century UK Periodicals Series 1

Gale databases Burney Newspaper Collection (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries)

Proquest British Periodicals Collections I and II (British Periodical Online)

There is some overlap between these. A few casual searches did produce a huge amount of potentially useful material, including biographical information and reviews of publications. Although a specific search (such as 'John Fuller' or 'William Bankes') is helpful, the titles given to the items which appear in the list are not always a good guide to the article. There is also the potential (just as in a library) for endless hours of edifying, amusing and generally satisfying time-wasting. A casual search for "Thebes" produced a potential 2000+ entries, including references to the unwrapping of mummies and other suitably serious and valuable stuff. I, of course, was immediately diverted by "Gibbon Redivivus: the History of the Decline and Fall of Little Felstead" in *The Court Magazine and Belle Assemblée* of Thursday 1 November 1832. The reference was certainly there: "Little Felstead was now at the height of its greatness ... Carthage – Tyre – Thebes – what are they now?" – but quite how I make use of this quote in anything I have yet to decide ... Another entry was located, rather surprisingly, under the heading "Another Serious Accident Through Orange Peel".

There was also a piece on the 'Wonders of Egypt' in *Peter Parley's Annual* (no date for the volume, but published between 1840 and 1892). This included the strange woodcut of Abu Simbel with small man on a horse, reproduced here on p.13 (but not as strange as the view of Luxor).

*Robert Morkot*

*Peta Rée*

# QUERIES AND REPLIES

Please send your replies to these Queries to the Bulletin Editor (57 Plantation Road, Oxford OX2 6JE) for inclusion in the next or later Bulletins.

## Don Pedro's Grandson?

In the English edition of his book, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert* (1913), the German traveller J.C. Ewald Falls, record (p.40) meeting, near the Mediterranean shore, a sergeant of the Coastguard, a tall negro riding a white camel – “a stylish looking fellow, in a yellow khaki uniform, armed with revolver, carbine, and an enormous *kurbasch* (horsewhip used on the Nile)”.

The man greeted him in French – and in German, and then settled down (with a proffered whisky and cigarette) to relate his life's story. Falls wrote that “to this day I am uncertain if he was wholly or partly lying.” *Does anyone know?*

The man told him that his name was Amadeus Haydn, his birthplace Rio, in Brazil, his grandfather the Emperor Don Pedro! “He knew Dresden and Vienna, kept a diary of events in his life and other matters, among which the archaeological notes were specially valuable to us.”

Falls and his party would gladly have purchased his drawings, but he refused to sell. He preferred a life of freedom – and admitted that whisky too attracted him.

*Deborah Manley would like to hear if anyone knows more about this man. Is the whereabouts of his collection of drawings known?*

## David Baillie

Roger de Keersmaecker asks:-

Does anyone know biographical information of David Baillie who was in Egypt in 1819 and left his graffiti, together with his brother Hugh Baillie on the rock of Abu Sir.

*If you can help please reply to the editor.*

## The 'Yanni' House

Dr Patricia Usick writes:-

We do have a good photographic record of the Yanni house in the last couple of years and some

early descriptions and images, but does anyone have photographs of their own or know of any others from the years when it might have been in better condition, with more walls standing?

## Edward VII in Egypt

Jacqueline Webb asks:-

Have any of your members conducted any research into the Egyptian visits of the Prince who became Edward VII please? It is commonly believed that he visited in 1858 and 1869 but my own research has indicated the probability that he also visited Egypt in 1862 and 1875. It would be helpful if we could establish which the different years in which mummies connected to him arrived in Britain etc.

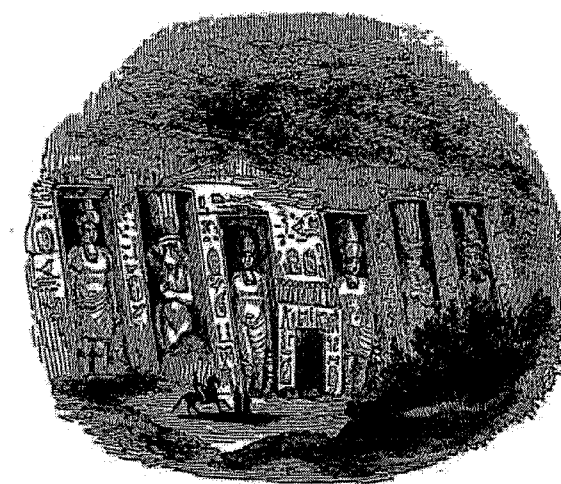
*Replies to the editor please.*

## George Lee

Alix Wilkinson writes:-

One of the buildings, remaining from the Khedive Ismail's luxurious garden at his Giza palace, is a pagoda. The builder is said, in an interview given to *Al Ahram* magazine 4-19 Oct. 2001, to be George Lee. Have any members come across George Lee?

*Replies to the editor please.*



The Temple of Nefertari at Abu Simbel from *Peter Parley's Annual*.



# FOOTPRINTS

## English Life at Assouan

The annual of the Victorian journal *Leisure Hour* of 1889 included a six-page article by one Francis Carr reminiscing on English life at Assouan a few years before, when Assouan had been a British Military Station, but was also “visited by antiquarians and described by tourists, rushing about to ‘do’ as much of everything that can be done.”

The town itself was a mix of mud huts with a river frontage of “more superior houses”, belonging mainly to Greek merchants and shop-keepers. These houses looked then, as now, across the Nile to the steep sand hills “at the edge of the Arabian desert, seemingly pathless up to the ancient rock tombs.” The army camps were scattered around the town – some close to the bazaar, others a mile or more away, “built among palm trees and, at least externally, picturesque.”

Some of the officers, instead of living in married quarters ashore, rented dahabeeyahs on the river. “It is” wrote Mr Carr, “a novel and funny experience for any English lady when she finds herself in a floating home.” The servants were rather like willing children requiring “the stimulus of pretty constant praise or blame.” The cook might have a mind of his own “evolving a series of dishes out of his consciousness”, doing all the shopping and provisioning in the bazaar – a fact that could cause problems when the lady of the boat, armed with an English and Arabic vocabulary, stepped out on the lower deck of the dahabeeyah after breakfast to arrange the meals of the day ...

On their side, the servants were eager for the ‘missis’ to array them in aprons and uniforms – made by the missis herself.

The great feature in a dahabeeyah – as those of us who went on the Nile in November know – is the upper deck over the roof of the saloon and cabins – which is reached by steep little flights of steps.

These upper decks are roofed and enclosed with awnings, which can be dropped or hitched up at will to suit the position of the sun. There are couches covered with draperies; the floor is carpeted with reps, and are additionally furnished with tables and lounging chairs. Thus they form as pretty a temporary drawing room as need be desired.

The great disadvantage of Assouan is the “shortness of the time between the sun’s losing its fiercest power and its setting.” Some people rose early to walk or ride before breakfast ... and then took a *siesta* – for Assouan is a sleepy place ... About four o’clock there would be a general rush out of doors: people went to see each other or started on their rides, scrambles or boating excursions – “what a gallop you can get in the desert ... what a nice time for pottering about ruins, or poring over inscriptions ...!” There was too “as much boating on the Nile as might be fancied, for the stream made rowing hard and steering complicated.” Walking At Assouan was limited: “along the bank between town and river – sometimes with a military band for accompaniment ... or you could scramble over rocks and rough stony hillocks behind the town, or you can climb the sandy hills on the opposite bank, sinking ankle to knee deep in the process.”

There was too the railway to Shellal, the village above the cataract opposite the island of Philae, which, “though not much to speak of as to speed or luxury” had the advantage that you travelled for nothing! The ride out this way “never seemed to lose its unique charm.” After passing the rocks and rough ground of the ancient Arabic burying place you emerged into the desert – and the English cemetery which lay below Tagoog. Beyond it was “a wild, strange place ...”

By the river, when the Nile was low, you could gallop along the sands, and beyond the race course was a green area of gardens and beyond that “the inevitable desert” – “but it was refreshing to the eyes to find oneself among anything so green for however short a time.”

“The form of entertainment for which Assouan was especially suited was, of course, picnics.” You could have every form of picnic “from the monster gathering with the officers of two regiments to counterbalance less than a dozen ladies, and a military band in attendance – to the homely expedition when two people found they had a free afternoon ...” There were moonlight picnics too “in such moonlight as one only sees on Egyptian nights ...”

Twice a week there was the excitement of “the post-boat from Cairo bringing our longed-for letters and tardy newspapers – and an occasional tourist ... The apparition of anything European and feminine was indeed an excitement ... Imagine the wild dissipation which the arrival of Mr Cook’s

fortnightly steamers gave to Assouan!” Once, Mr Cook had “entertained the local English to a banquet and dance afterwards on his new luxurious steamer.”

*But, by the time Mr Carr was writing, the British army had almost withdrawn and Assouan was returned to its pristine state and English life there was a thing of the past.*

*Deborah Manley*

## Travelling in AD 404

At the ASTENE Conference in Durham I talked a little about Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais in Cyrenaica and his travels around the Eastern Mediterranean. Some these travels were educational – to study in Alexandria, and to visit Greece, to which he and his family were still closely attached even though they claimed to have been settled in Cyrene for some 900 or more years!

One of the journeys – including a three-year long visit to Constantinople was political – Synesius was sent with a petition from Cyrene to the Emperor Arcadius. During his lengthy stay he may have made another tour of Greece. Another visit was made to Alexandria so that he could be installed by the Patriarch as Bishop of Ptolemais. On a more personal note, Synesius visited Alexandria for his marriage, and it seems that it was returning from this that the events narrated in this letter occurred.

Synesius was born in Cyrene probably around AD 370. His family claimed a long a distinguished ancestry, and although we know little of them, they were certainly leading citizens of the city.

Synesius studied at the university of Alexandria (around 394) and there he met the famous Hypatia to whom seven letters are addressed. In about AD 397 he was appointed by Cyrene as special envoy to the emperor Arcadius at Constantinople, where he stayed three years. Because Cyrenaica had been devastated by locusts, by the Ausurians, and by corrupt administration, it had difficulty paying its taxes. Synesius was therefore sent with a golden wreath to the young emperor – his speech *De Regno (On Kingship)* survives. Later, Synesius was pressed by the citizens of Ptolemais to become their bishop, and invested at Alexandria by his friend Theophilus the primate of Alexandria., in AD 410.

The world revealed by the writings of Synesius is one in which the Classical tradition is still

pervasive, although Christianity is increasingly the dominant religion. Synesius himself only converted relatively late, and can hardly be deemed ‘orthodox’ in his religious views.

The translation of the letter is by Augustine FitzGerald, 1926 *The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene. Translated into English with Introduction and notes.* Oxford University Press.

“Although we started from Bendideum [*Alexandria harbour*] at early dawn, we had scarcely passed Pharius Myrmex by noonday, for our ship went aground two or three times in the bed of the harbour. ...

“I will tell you first of all how our crew was made up. Our skipper [Amarantus] was fain of death owing to his bankrupt condition; then besides him we had twelve sailors, thirteen in all! More than half of them, including the skipper, were Jews – a graceless race and fully convinced of the piety of sending to Hades as many Greeks as possible. The remainder were a collection of peasants who even as late as last year had never gripped an oar... We had embarked to number of more than fifty, about a third of us being women, most of them young and comely. Do not, however, be too quick to envy us, for a screen separated us from them and a stout one at that... Nay, Priapus himself might well have been temperate had he taken passage with Amarantus, for there was never a moment when this fellow allowed us to be free from fear of the uttermost danger. As soon as we had doubled the temple of Poseidon, near you [*Alexandria*], he made straight for Taposiris [*still standing, to the west of Alexandria*], with all sails spread, to all seeming bent upon confronting Scylla ... This manoeuvre we detected only just as the vessel was nearing the reefs, and we all raised a mighty cry that perforce he gave up his attempt to battle with the rocks. All at once he veered about as though some new idea had possessed him, and turned his vessel’s head to the open, struggling as best he might against a contrary sea.

“Presently a fresh south wind springs up and carries us along, and soon we are out of sight of land and have come into the track of the double-sailed cargo vessels, whose business does not lie with our Libya; they are sailing in quite another course. ... a gale commenced to blow from the north, and the violent wind soon raised seas mountains high. This gust falling suddenly on us, drove our sail back, and made it concave in place of its convex form, and the

ship was all but capsized by the stern. With great difficulty, however, we headed her in.

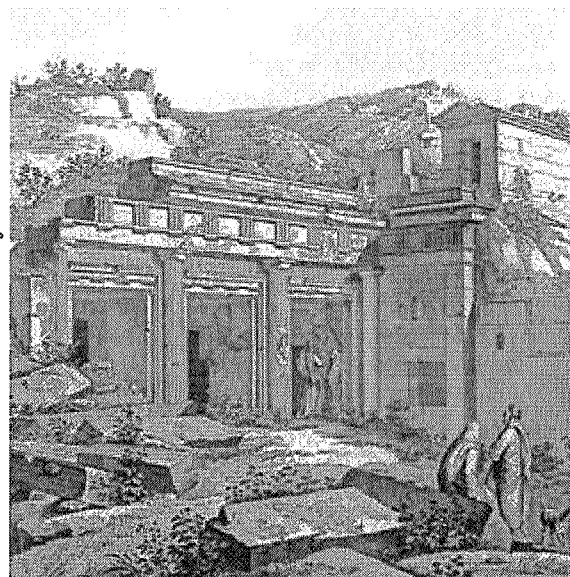
“... as the hours passed the seas increased continually in volume. [*An account of the eve of Sabbath follows*] They keep this day holy and apart from the others, and they pass it in rest from labour of all kinds. Our skipper accordingly let go the rudder from his hands the moment he guessed that the sun’s rays had left the earth ... [*at first the passengers do not understand why*] ... in the middle of the night he voluntarily returned to the helm. ‘For now,’ he said, ‘we are clearly in danger of death, and the law commands.’ On this the tumult sprang up afresh, groaning of men and shrieking of women... [*the women passengers put on their jewellery and anyone with gold suspends it around the neck, so that they carry their fee for burial if their bodies are washed up on shore – and anyone finding would fear Nemesis if they did not bury them*] Now what made death gape at our feet was the fact that the ship was running with all sails spread, and that there was no means of taking them in, for as often as we attempted this we were thwarted by the ropes, which stuck in the pulleys; and again we had a secret fear lest in the night time, even if we lived out the sea, we should approach land in this sorry plight.

“But day broke before all this had time to occur, and never, I know, did we behold the sun with greater joy. The wind grew more moderate as the temperature became milder, and thus, as the moisture evaporated, we were able to work the rigging and handle the sails. We were unable, it is true, to replace our sail by a new one, for this was already in the hands of the pawnbrokers, ... and lo, in four hours time we who had imagined ourselves already in the jaws of death, were disembarking in a remote desert place ... our ship was riding in the open sea, for the spot was not a harbour, and it was riding on a single anchor. The second anchor had been sold, and a third Amaranthus did not possess. ... Thus we waited two days until the sea should have abated its fury. When, however, we were unable to discover any way out by land, for we could find no one in the country, we decided to try our fortune again at sea. We started straightway at dawn with a wind which blew from the stern all that day and the following one, but towards the end of the second day the wind left us and we were in despair. However, only too soon should we be longing for a calm. It was the thirteenth day of the waning moon ... So at the very moment when we should have stayed in harbour, we so far forgot ourselves as to run out again to sea. The storm

opened with north winds and with heavy rain during the moonless night, presently the winds raged without measure, and the sea became deeply churned up. ... I will only say that the magnitude of the storm was helpful. First the sailyard began to crack ... then it broke in the middle and very nearly killed us all. It seems that this very accident, failing to destroy us, was the means of our salvation. ... we had shaken off the rapacious violence of our enforced run, and were carried along during a day and a night, and at the second crowing of the cock, before we knew it, behold we were on a sharp reef which ran out from the land like a short peninsula. [*A man in a boat now rows out and takes over the helm*] ... after proceeding not more than fifty stadia, he brought her to anchor in a delightful little harbour, the name of which I believe is Azarium [*Ptolemy Azarion, in the Gulf of Bomba*], and there disembarked us on the beach. ... A little while later he brought in another ship, and then again another, and before evening had fallen we were in all five vessels saved by this godsent old man ... On the following day other ships arrived, some of which had put out from Alexandria the day before we set sail.”

The start date is calculated as 28<sup>th</sup> January AD 404 and the distance about 400 nautical miles. The description has echoes in other narratives right down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Robert Morkot



Tombs at Cyrene from Jean-Raimond Pacho’s travels in Marmarica and Cyrenaica, 1827.

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